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How the U.S. Monitors Soviet Arms

What disturbs some senators the most about the Soviet Union's latest military provocation in Cuba was the time it took for our intelligence agencies to discover and confirm the presence of Russian combat troops fewer than 100 miles from the U.S. mainland.

For the speed with which we can catch the Soviets in violations is a vital question which must be resolved before the Senate is likely to ratify the strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT II).

From secret documents and intelligence sources, our associate Dale Van Atta has pieced together a case history of one suspected Soviet treaty violation.

The chips in this particular game were new silos at missile centers in the Soviet Union. The stakes were high. Were the Russians cheating on the number of missiles they had agreed on in the SALT I treaty?

Up until 1970, the Soviets had put their missile-site control centers in underground bunkers near the missile silos. In that year, they began replacing these relatively primitive bunkers with underground silos that looked identical to those that housed the missiles.

When the first SALT agreement was signed in 1972, U.S. officials expressed concern that the new silos might be intended for actual missiles — an illegal stretching of the agreed-on limit. The Soviets assured U.S. representatives the silos were to be used only as launch-control centers.

The intelligence agencies were ordered to check it out. It should be noted, perhaps to the disappointment

of incurable romantics, that our espionage was carried out mainly by electronic surveillance, not the undercover spies of popular fiction.

The intelligence analysts eventually decided the Russians had told the truth, and listed five reasons for this conclusion: Capsules put in the new silos were the same kind that housed control equipment elsewhere. Protruding antennas, cable patterns and out-buildings fit the launch-control function. Only one of the new silos was being built at each missile site. New silos were the only visible launch-control centers at two sites where no underground bunkers existed, and all the new silos had been built next to the command centers they were replacing.

The Americans continued to bring the new silos up in discussions with the Soviets as late as 1976, while the intelligence agencies worked on a supplementary assignment: What would it take to convert the control-center silos into missile holders?

The answer to this one was that such modifications would be extensive, time-consuming and costly — and more importantly, hard to hide.

So the intelligence analysts were able to tell President Carter in 1977 that "the extent of these modifications would make it very hard to adapt the silos in significant numbers without detection." On the strength of that assurance, the United States dropped the subject.

~~Swiss Shift~~ The Air Force and the State Department put pressure on the International Communication Agency to throw a \$7.5 million contract

to a Swiss firm under questionable circumstances. It was part of a deal to help two politically powerful pals, Northrup and General Electric, get a juicy aircraft contract from the Swiss.

The loser in this shady international backscratching deal was a small, efficient American firm, and possibly the American taxpayer as well. Here's how the fast shuffle was worked, according to internal government documents:

In a carrot-and-stick approach, the Defense Department got the Swiss government to buy \$233 million worth of Northrup-GE F5 jet fighters. Then the brass hats sought to get a Swiss firm, Brown Boveri, the contract for 12 Voice of America transmitters.

The stick was applied to the ICA, first getting the agency to waive U.S. regulations designed to give business to American firms, and then, even more outrageously, shaving the specifications so the chosen Swiss firm could meet them.

With this help, Brown Boveri came in with a bid \$650,000 lower than the only U.S. bidder, Continental Electronics Manufacturing Co. of Dallas.

ICA points to the \$650,000 "saving" as justification and stressed that the waiver also allowed other European firms to bid. ICA denied pressure had anything to do with the waiver, and claimed the amendment of the specifications was "routine."

But Continental disputes the so-called savings, pointing out that the Treasury has lost far more in taxes that would have been paid by the company, and its workers, subcontractors and suppliers.